

Panmure Road,  
Otahuhu,  
AUCKLAND.

To Labour Organisations, Friends and Comrades.

Dear Fellow-workers,

My Muse has been singing in Ballad and Lyric of our common toils, hopes, needs, dreams, joys, sorrows, struggles and aspirations, and in those drab days never were there more need for the voice of LIBERTY and FREEDOM to be heard. Many of our comrades have appreciated those Ballads and Lyrics and I wish you to make it possible for a selection to be published in book form. This means your financial co-operation.

I have selected some 40 pieces, which I feel confident will fan the flames of LIBERTY and FREEDOM in the hearts of the people.

So "BALLADS OF THE TRACK: LYRICS OF LIBERTY AND LOVE", with a preface by Robert Hogg, will be published as soon as you make it possible, by taking out subscriptions for copies in advance, thereby guaranteeing the cost of printing and publishing. In the event of the necessary finance not being raised the monies thus subscribed will be returned, or, if over subscribed the surplus will be entirely devoted to educational work.

I feel confident that my association with you in our industrial and social life throughout those throbbing years makes it unnecessary for me to say more. The date of publication will be announced in "The Maoriland Worker" and "Truth".

The special subscription list is returnable to the publisher, Reliance Printery, 161 Albert Street, Auckland, by June 30th. 1918. Kindly use the order forms supplied herewith and forward orders with cash to the publisher's address. Meanwhile if sufficient subscriptions are forwarded the book will be immediately published and posted.

I await your necessary co-operation with hope and confidence.

Yours as ever

For Industrial and Social Freedom,

E. HUNTER, (Billy Banjo.)



When Joseph Ward was created a Baronet at the Coronation in 1911 the miners were outraged. An hereditary title ran counter to the 'interests of a democratic community'. 'Baronet Joe' was, in their view, prepared to buy personal glory with a battle cruiser and the lives of workers.

The Denniston miners in the early months of 1912 were, as one miner remarked, 'jumpy'. Many wanted immediate industrial action as an expression of their growing anger. When Blackball miners struck in opposition to the dog watch there were demands for a general coal strike on the Coast. Unionists in Greymouth hesitated; many thought local organisation was not yet strong enough to sustain a general stoppage. Reluctantly, the Denniston unionists chose to stay at work and support the Blackball miners with a levy. 'Billy Banjo' (Edward Hunter) sadly complained that the Buller miners had let the Blackball boys down. He poured out his frustration in verse to the **Maoriland Worker**. His sentiments were widely shared.

The opportunity for action came in October 1913, when the Red Fed executive called for a general strike in support of Wellington watersiders. Here at last was the showdown which radicals had sought. The Denniston unionists responded vigorously. They would cease work until victory was achieved at Wellington and until victimised Huntly coalminers were re-employed. Feelings ran high on the plateau and secretary, L. Diamond, warned that Denniston miners would bring industry to a halt and, if necessary, 'invade even Wellington'. A shed housing the drum and winding gear for the incline was blown up. Twice, Denniston miners marched on Westport in response to rumours that a ship was to be coaled. Twice they returned home triumphant; no coal left the Buller. After five weeks coal supplies in the cities began to run low and Denniston miners came under heavy attack. The **Wellington Post** demanded that the coalfields be cleansed of 'rebels and breeders of rebels'. Denniston miners who ventured to Wellington to see for themselves the violence

which erupted in the city were shocked at the vehemence of the conservative response to the strike. 'Billy Banjo' Hunter was incensed. 'If they want revolution they can have it', he angrily told Wellington strikers. The Supreme Court found his remarks seditious and placed him on probation for twelve months. Violence was absent on the Buller but the brutality of Wellington increased the miners' determination.



*Edward Hunter (Billy Banjo) was born in Ponfeigh, Lanarkshire. He migrated to New Zealand and spent some years at Huntly before moving to Denniston. Much of his verse was first published in the **Maoriland Worker**. It was subsequently brought together in **Ballads of the Track**. Hunter returned to Scotland and there wrote *The road the men came home* a largely autobiographical novel about life on the coalfields of Lanarkshire, Huntly and Denniston.*

*(H. Roth)*

The life of the trade union historian would be a much easier one if unions kept their records neatly in an orderly office. Union officials rarely, in past and present, have had the time to order their affairs as they would like. Thus, few trade unions possess a comprehensive set of records. The Denniston Miners' Union is no exception. Apart from a deposit in the Turnbull Library, (Denniston Miners' Industrial Union of Workers: Miscellaneous papers, 1880 — 1969) little has survived the passing of time. The following notes are offered as a starting point for those wishing to delve deeper than this survey history takes them. Where chapters rest upon my own as yet unpublished material the references are given more fully.

1. The struggle for acceptance, 1884 — 1890. Appendix and Journal to the New Zealand House of Representatives (AJHR), 1880, D4, pp. 1-13; Union Steam Ship Company Archives, especially the correspondence between C Holdsworth and G McLean; Westport Coal Company Minute Book, 1884-5; *Lyttelton Times* 12 April, 9 August 1889, 1 April, 2 August, 7 October 1890; *Grey River Argus* 16, 24 December 1884, 25 January 1887, 9, 17 July, 16 October, 3, 13 December 1889, 4, 7, 8 July, 23 September, 9, 8, 10, 27 October 1890, 16 March, 21 September 1891; *Barnsley Chronicle*, 18 August 1879, 13 March 1880. The following theses and books were also helpful: E A Smallholme-Fraser, 'The evolution of the coal mining community of Denniston', M A thesis, University of Canterbury, 1978; P I Redmond, 'The rise of the Grey Valley Coal Industry, 1860-1890', M A thesis, University of Canterbury, 1978; Ian Merriitt, 'A reappraisal of the 1890 maritime strike in New Zealand', M A thesis, University of Canterbury, 1969; John Rosanowski, 'Politics and railways: the Midland line,

1887-1918' in Philip Ross May (ed) *Miners and Militants*, University of Canterbury, 1975; G L Popple, *Malvern County*, Malvern County Council, 1953, has some comments on John Lomas's pre-Denniston, New Zealand career; Frank Machin, *The Yorkshire Miners* volume 1, National Union of Mineworkers, 1958.

2. The struggle to resurrect the Denniston Miners' Union from the defeat of 1890 is extremely difficult to reconstruct. The following were the most helpful: *Denniston Industrial Association of Workers and the Westport Coal Company*, Westport, Tyrell and Co., Printers, 1896; *Lyttelton Times*, 19 March, 1, 3, 4, 7, 12, 17, 24 April 1891, 23 July 1891; *Grey River Argus* 21 September 1891; *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (NZPD)*, 1891-1898; James Holt, 'The political origins of compulsory arbitration in New Zealand: a comparison with Great Britain' *New Zealand Journal of History*, 1976, pp 99-109; James Holt, 'Compulsory Arbitration in New Zealand, 1894-1901, the evolution of an Industrial relations system,' *New Zealand Journal of History*, 1980, pp 179-200.
3. The coming of the Red Feds, 1900-1914. The best single source of information for this period is the *Maoriland Worker* which the Federation of Labour purchased from the Shearers' Union in 1911. Other useful sources are: P J O'Farrell, 'Politics and coal: the socialist vanguard, 1904-8' in Philip Ross May (ed), *Miners and Militants*, pp 101-127; P Hickey *Red Fed Memoirs*, Wellington, 1925; Valerie Smith, 'Gospel of Hope' or Gospel of Plunder', research exercise BA (Hons) Massey University 1976; *Tom Mann*



AUTHOR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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I was built the same year as our village church. That was in 1885, Ponfeigh, Lanarkshire, Scotland. Both of us have seen strange times - I think that I can truthfully say that I have redeemed more souls than the church ever reclaimed. This may seem an odd way to open an autobiography. That church has the date engraven in stone by a well-trained craftsman and keeps the year of my birth in easy remembrance. It was also at this time that the British Working Man was granted his limited vote in Parliamentary Elections and Education made compulsory in Elementary Schools. To write and to read and to vote, these three great rights appeared in the Workers' skies at my birth. . . and that brand new church . . . how could one ever forget such a thoughtful and busy world into which one was born ?

The home I was brought into, given, or just simply stepped into, was an abode of miner-folk who dwelt in the long row of two apartment houses. I came in June, and perhaps that is why I have craved for the music and the roses ever since

My childhood was the mysterious thing it was to all miners' children. Stone heaps, coils of disused rope, broken wheels, glowing ash-dumps, machines and grinding engines filled our external life in these communities.



communities. /

Internally - who could describe the inside of the miner's home in these rows ? I was the sixth of the family - three sisters and two brothers. The elder having died before I was born. Another sister and three brothers followed me and so together we made quite the average family of these days. The overcrowded home, devise life as best as may be in such circumstances, gave small chance for any family to thrive. I think the drying of the wet, grimy pit-clothes in the house was the most tragic thing of all. Yet above the forbidding and fretful life there were social times that glimpsed something of the DREAM of LIFE.

Strikes, lockouts and strife in many forms were common characteristics of my childhood community, and the crude ambulance to remove the dead and injured was almost a daily spectacle. These things childhood never can forget. They burn in life over the long years even now.

Singing, sport, church, pubs, beer, bibles were all strangely entangled in the right to vote, read and write trinity. The miner was a folk that could fight, curse and pray in a way all their own.

My childhood was lit up with a powerful man who seemed to come with the breath of the prophets. This man was Bob Smillie. In my school-days, I well remember, Smillie came to the pitland and addressed the men and filled the community with strong words about making life better.



better. /

It is the prayer in every miner's home that no member of the family will ever be given to the relentless pits.

In my tenth year I left school to be employed on a farm as herd-laddie. I had taken two classes in my last year at school. I liked school, but I was filled with joy to think that I might be a help to the home.

The food at the farm was satisfying. Life on the moorland tending the young cattle became intensely interesting. All the ways and haunts of the wild things there I began to know, and a new world opened around me. My books I had brought to continue my education, also I had been fortunate in getting some of the Scots Classic legends, and traditional story works. This new universe grew to become a romantic and pleasant place. I longed for the companionship of my childhood - just to share my fortunes and to be with them again.

Something was forming unconsciously within me. I was a great admirer of the ancient prophets, and probably these men of word and action moved me. At all events I rebelled against my masters and ran away. This happened three times during my six-month term. At the end of which I was free.

My freedom, strangely enough, took me to the pits. Because I was starting with my father I was allowed down before the statutory age of twelve.

twelve /

The pit was famed for the number of accidents, and because it provided steady work it was known as "the glory of the pits." The place I first worked in was the scene of a fatal accident. . . that road ever after remained to me like a graveyard. I was soon to see a man killed every day in this pit, and accidents of all kinds take place.

Pits are like that. In the Ponfeigh community there were two. One went on fire. The other was drowned out. I was five years of age then and had commenced schooling. The miners had to migrate. My family crossed over to Coalburn, some six miles apart. No. 4 Bellfield was my first introduction to industrial life and the pits. Now these pits are no more. I had travelled round the world twice and returned to work less than a stone throw from where I started when the last shift was worked. That was in 1921. Our strike stopped the pumps and also coal production for all time.

When I was fifteen my family returned to Ponfeigh. A new group of pits had been set going - these have survived several strikes and lockouts. In attempting to redeem our race some of us have been scattered widely apart.

My fourteen years absence in Australasia is recorded in THE ROAD THE MEN CAME HOME, which Philip Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Labour Governments, published in 1920.

During my dream-days upon the wild moorlands as herd I jingled in poetry. In New Zealand I held many National



National /

offices in the working-class movement, Educational, Industrial, Political, Journalist and Lecturer in Social Sciences. My pen-name was "Billy Banjo." A collection of poetry entitled: "Ballads of the Track: Lyrics of Liberty and Love" was published and ran into four editions. When the strikers' dead list was issued after the military shootings in the Johannesburg rising, *South Africa* our comrades printed a poem of mine with the tragic record. Others found appreciation in the Americas and other lands, and I received many inspiring letters from fighters in the Cause of Freedom from all parts where Capitalism had come to rule the lives of men.

I was the first white man to be imprisoned in New Zealand for sedition. That was in 1914 - 1915. Both years found me in prison. The story is told in THE ROAD THE MEN CAME HOME.

It was in 1906 that I set out for new lands. I returned finally in 1919 to Scotland.

More books and poems since then. The Socialist Children sang my songs unaware of their composer. These were highly appreciated. I went on composing. Now my musical folk dramas and plays have established a new departure from orthodox standards and conceptions. My first big work, Marie Mitanzie, or The Disinherited, a community musical drama was staged in a number of towns

towns /

and villages by a cast of sixty-three. All miners and mill workers. We drew upon the Ponfeigh pits themselves for our props. and painted our own scenic effects. This was the first of its kind ever produced in this country.

The Overture takes twenty minutes to play and the drama two and a half hours with no interval. Solo, duet, chorus, lullaby, dance and choral were part of the design all combining to present the realities of working-class life and painting the DREAM of Emancipation of all those who Toil. To write the drama, lyrics and compose the music, including the orchestration, and to hear the tributes of my people in the deficit areas for the work was something worth living to hear.

Several other musical dramas have been staged since then.

I expect that so long as I survive the pits I shall go on writing and composing for the Disinherited and Dispossessed.

My big DREAM is one day to stage my Industrial Opera THE DOORS OF MEN. I think there is a culture and art definitely belonging to the toilers. If I fail to express ~~mm~~ this great theme someone some other day will arise and give articulation to the sufferings and hopes of the common people.

Last year I resigned from the Scots National Executives of the I.L.P. and Labour Party. I often wonder just what those

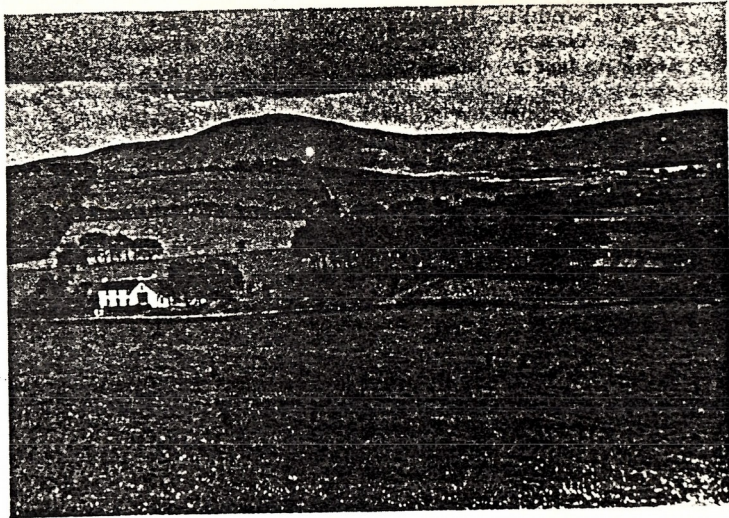


those /

who fought for the Vote would say now when they could see the use that has been made of it by the workers ?

Let me write their songs and compose their music to sing at the wash-tub, at the pit, the store and the market and hear their spirits rise anew in the courage of a Great DREAM - that I think would be a fitting and my best contribution to securing the music and the roses and for all. A People cannot go through these tragic times and not retain something which will endure. If and when the pits close finally upon me may it be that the songs and music will live on to inspire till the end of the red,red blossomed road -

Edward Hunter



## CARMICHAEL

The dream that filled the summer glen  
 For me again will never wake,  
 Yet oft I'll seek the inmost ben,  
 And take the readings of the rake;  
 The peace that held this heart of mine,  
 Prophetic lights that fired each burn,  
 The faith that men said was Divine,  
 They may, but I shall ne'er return.

I'm wearied of the Christian lies,  
 And drunk with Pagan truths that blind:  
 I shall not walk beneath your skies,  
 Nor cloud the fair scenes with my mind:  
 This wayward hand that stretches out  
 To move the bluebells side by side  
 Will pause, and brush aside the doubt  
 To leave them in their summer pride.

Why should I deem the summer flowers  
 And summer songs were gifts for me?  
 For in that dream came naught of power  
 That brought the dark o'er land and sea:  
 As light as thistle-down, I wist,  
 Or like the echo in the glen,  
 Or conning o'er old Tinto's kist,  
 The faith and joy were lightsome then!

from: Edward Tinto,  
 When Sleeps the Tide  
 (Glasgow, ca. 1943,  
 privately publ.)

Here now I stand beside a grave  
 Where once with pick and spade I stood  
 And felt the peace that all men crave,  
 However bad, or just, or good:  
 I heard again the parson say,  
 As all who come this way must hear,  
 "Go, dust to dust, and clay to clay"—  
 Was that to-day or yester-year!

Sleep on, and in your resting know  
 The scenes you loved are dearer still  
 To one where'er his footsteps go  
 Far from the shadows on the hill:  
 Though all you taught, and all you prayed,  
 And all you hoped have been in vain,  
 The heart may turn, however swayed,  
 To mark each loss and count it gain.

Aye, Tinto, I shall come again  
 To hear the songs and meet the flowers,  
 And mayhap find within the glen  
 Dreams fair as bluebells in those bowers;  
 For all the wealth that e'er I wist  
 Is found in this your summer pride:  
 To drink your cup, and seek your kist,  
 And hear the music of the Clyde.



## WHOSE CHILDREN?

It was to the City of Glasgow you came,  
 Citizens who live and walk the streets here,  
 One and a half million of us,  
 Look on the flowing waters and the Cathedral  
 And proclaim the place Red City on the Clyde,  
 But you would not know, you who came to Glasgow,  
 You came and had gone before you had time to say Good-bye,  
 Only Good Morning. Ninety of you out of every thousand  
 Good Mornings—some did not wait to say Good Morning, Red City.  
 Never less than eighty out of the thousand  
 And only last year one hundred and eleven:  
 Ten thousand every five years,  
 Twenty thousand in ten years,



But you, you could not count up to about one.  
 The reek, the damp, the fog and the rotten walls,  
 Through which you came from God's Pearly Gates,  
 Choked you, and you could not say Good-bye, Red Clyde.  
 There was what the people called a smallpox epidemic  
 And half the City population queued up to get vaccinated :  
 What a racket before they, too, might have to say  
 Goodbye, dear Clyde.  
 And that cost twenty-five thousand pounds,  
 A heart-breaking rise on the rates and taxes  
 Of a half-penny in the pound,  
 And eight died. Eight out of one and a half million.  
 Mind you, if that smallpox had stopped the dogs,  
 The football play, and left the town short of Lord Provosts,  
 There would have been revolution.  
 But you would not know, you died,  
 Ninety out of every thousand  
 Not to grow up and become a doctor or a nurse,  
 A saint or college and university don  
 To plan and avenge—  
 So the fog and the damp and the rotten walls live on.  
 You are small, too small to hold a span of breath,  
 And the dogs, the football play, and the dance and Cathedral,  
 All proclaim the Red City on the Clyde.  
 Oh, the war, yes there is a war on,  
 A new kind of war it is called,  
 And the statesmen say what is most wanted now is population,  
 You ninety dead out of every thousand  
 Could not have considered that else you might have stayed here,  
 And there is no one to speak.  
 The damp, rotten walls, the soil and the fog,  
 Cannot argue against a four-ton bomb,  
 You never got a chance to make and throw a four-ton bomb,  
 You did not wait to see what statesmen can achieve  
 Through health and education,  
 Nor the accomplishments of people who make statesmen—  
 You did not stay with us.  
 And there is none to speak.  
 But I forget already : the dead of the R.A.F.,  
 The Fleet and the Army speak grandly for you :  
 A better, new, wiser world they say to the open skies  
 And to the flames and the waters,  
 And the Civil Defence of the total war include you in their total.  
 The teachers of this great City are silent about you,

And the prophets leave the years to make this ugly poem :  
 Children and poetry ought to be lovely and sweet as lilac,  
 And the preacher says 'tis God's goodwill it should be so,  
 The Public Press knows what the Public does not want to know :  
 Murders, wars, brothels, divorces, dogs and racing,  
 All are o.k. front-page news—the Press knows—  
 To keep the civic mind and conscience innocent is silent.  
 The Police are too busy with sin and crime  
 And regulating traffic, too busy to notice you.  
 And should your little feet along the grandeur come  
 Of Sauchiehall Street—  
 But you will not do that in the finery and rich furs three,  
 Nor turn your little breasts, that could not hold life's breath,  
 Towards the sun.  
 The long miles of little feet and breathless breasts  
 Must not appear in the streets of the Red City on the Clyde.  
 So the citizens build miracle ships, and planes and greater bombs,  
 And the dance and show and centpercent goes on as the Public want  
 Why did you not go to New Zealand ?  
 To the meadows and the buttercups and daisies  
 And the clean sweet open spaces and laughter of children there :  
 Only two of you out of every thousand would have died  
 Away from the fog, the soil, the reek and rotten walls.  
 You little babes, Infant Mortality  
 That's what the Records name you.  
 Here is your epitaph : Out of every thousand births died  
 In 1938—87 ; 1939—80 (the lowest ever) ; 1940—95 ;  
 1941—111 ; 1942—90.  
 Looks and reads like a dog or racing card :  
 It is the birth and death of little babies in the Red City.  
 The poets cannot sing for you,  
 For you there is no song,  
 Your lullaby of fog and soil and damp and rotten walls  
 Would not make music even for the B.B.C.,  
 And so the poets broke their lyres,  
 Only when the lyres lay dead did their music join your lullaby.  
 Whose children are you ?  
 A magistrate of the Red City  
 Where Justice is not rationed writes this halting poem,  
 The rhythm of little feet and the laughter of little children  
 Are not here to pattern and shape a joyous song,  
 It is a halting poem of sin and shame and crime,  
 Convener of the Red Clyde Public Health writes this of you,  
 My children.